Reading and Writing in "The Middle Years" and "The Death of the Lion" *

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この研究では、ヘンリー・ジェイムズの短編、"The Middle Years" (1893) と "The Death of the Lion" (1895)を扱う。そして、"The Middle Years" の最後の場面を再考し、書き手と読者の関係について考察する。この二編は双方とも、作者と読者とを主題とする作品である。特に "The Middle Years" は、ジェイムズ自身の改訂作業と重ね合わせることができる。双方の作品で読者は、作者の作品の起源としての権威をおびやかす存在であり、作者は最終的に死んでしまう。

Julie Rivkin は論文の中で、ジェイムズの改訂作業に焦点をあて、*The Golden Bowl* (『金色の盃』) へのジェイムズの序文と、"The Middle Years" とを分析している。その分析の際に、作者の意図を忠実にたどる、プラトンの表象理論に沿う読者と、作品にずれや差異を持ち込む、脱構築的読者の概念を使う。"The Middle Years" に関して最終的に彼女は、医者ヒューがプラトン的な読者の役割を果たし、作品の結論は作者の権威の完全な回復であることに合意する。しかしまた一方でヒューが、伯爵夫人という脱構築的読者を伴って現れたことは、作者の改訂という行為が所有と非所有 (あるいは所有不可能性) の署名であること、そして作者が改訂されたテクストの永久に広がっていく余白に書かれていくものを支配するすべはないことを暗示しているとも指摘する。

しかし、ヒューもまた、脱構築的読者として機能しているように思われる。これは、"The Death of the Lion" と照らし合わせることから明らかとなる。三人称形式で語られる "The Middle Years" の中では作者の崇拝者の内面は語られなかった。一方で、"The Death of the Lion" の中では、一人称の語り手となっている。"The Death of the Lion" に登場する作者パラディは、作品中で、読者と金銭的支配とに翻弄される。語り手は、自分は作者の絶対的な味方であると主張する。ところが語りによって、実際には彼が、作家パラディの権威を巧妙に操り、最後には失墜させることに加担していることが明らかとなる。そして今、自らが語り手として執筆しているのである。

作者は読者を支配しようがなく、作品を支配し続けることもできない。死によって作

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*「中年」と「ライオンの死」における読むことと書くこと (齊藤園子)

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者は、作品を所有した瞬間を保持できるが、それは読者が不在の所有である。この二つの作品では、常に作者と読者が主導権をめぐって入れ替わっている。"The Middle Years"の結論を再考すると、ヒューの声は作者の声を導いていると言える。これらの作品は、芸術の賞揚、プラトン的読者の可能性というよりも、常にあいまいで結論を許さない作者と作品、そして読者の関係に言及しているのである。

1 "The Middle Years" and "The Death of the Lion"

The focus of this essay is on the identity of an author and his text in the short stories, "The Middle Years" (1893) and "The Death of the Lion" (1895), by Henry James. Critic Julie Rivkin analyses James's "Preface" to The Golden Bowl and then "The Middle Years," trying to clarify his revision and its surrounding arguments. She insightfully introduces different concepts of representation to explain the different concepts of reading in James's Preface. Then she classifies the figures in "The Middle Years" into different types of readers, specifically, a Platonic reader and deconstructive supplements. I argue, however, that her classification system is still insufficient to explain the indeterminacy of the text's identity.

In the following discussion concerning "The Middle Years" and "The Death of the Lion," the concept of reading and writing in "The Middle Years" is clarified once compared with "The Death of the Lion." These two stories, address an author and the author's admirer, seem to be parallel to each other, and yet they have different styles of narration. Both stories focus on the relationship between an author and a young man — a young man who is apparently a prolific reader of the author. They deal with authors as a source of textual meaning, while also throwing into question this belief. While yearning for the acceptance of the reading public, the authors come to realize that their readers are out of their authorial control. The authors tend to desire a longer life in order to continue trying to keep the meaning of the texts under their control, but at the same time, they are tempted to die in order to conclude the interminable writing. The different styles of narration found in "The Middle Years" (third-person) and "The Death of the Lion" (first-person), allow for a comparison between the two with regard to the author-function.

By examining these short stories, the practice of writing will also be clarified regarding the extent to which James was driven to make intensive revisions. As is well known, James extensively revised his major novels and stories for the New

York Edition in his later years. The practice of revision became his major concern and his Preface to each work of the New York Edition gives us clues to how James was working on his early novels and stories at that time. The issue of what an author is in the short stories is related to the issue of revision and writing that James himself exercised.

2 Narrating Realism: The Third-Person Narrator

In "The Middle Years," Dencombe, the author, is ill and spending his April days in Bournemouth, England. On the border of life and death, nonetheless he continues revising the text he has just published. He exercises his authority over the text. Associated with God and paradise, the garden of the hotel, the "soft and bright" April days (MY 239) and the red book cover of his new book, Dencombe appears to maintain full, almost God-like, authority over his creation even if he is ill.

However, Dencombe is at a critical stage in the creation of his authorial identity: at the borders of the sea and land, life and death, and the author and the reader. He is conscious of his mortality and grieving over the limits of his authorial control. The text will be beyond his control after his death and he wants "a second age, an extension" of his life (MY 241). "A first existence" (MY 241) appears to him too short in order to make his text a work of art. He laments over having lost his original sense of his published text. At the same time, however, the sense has come back by reading his book. The experience is the awareness that he is a reader as well as an author. His awareness of his identity as a reader is depicted in the well-known passage:

> He[Dencombe] dived once more into his story and was drawn down, as by a siren's hand, to where, in the dim underworld of fiction, the great glazed tank of art, strange silent subjects float. (MY 241)

Joyce Carol Oates describes this sentence as James's depiction of the "awakening of the author by way of becoming his own reader" (Oates 260). The author himself loses his original sense of meaning and intention in his own published text. We might also say that this passage is related to the awakening of the readerly sense within an author, which leads him to become an author who writes for readers again. Julie

Rivkin rightly indicates that the awareness of the author as a reader of his own work gives him a sense of "self-division," a "self-doubling" or "othering of himself" (Rivkin 156).[1] It is a death, in her words, of a singular authority and the birth of a reader; in short, it is the birth of a reader within the writer. As a reader-writer, he notices that his text no longer belongs to him; rather, it belongs to the reader.

The blurring of the boundary between Dencombe's identity as an author and a reader is also symbolised in the setting. At the seashore, on the boundary between the sea and the land, Dencombe watches three figures from above: the Countess, Miss Vernham, and Doctor Hugh. They attract his attention more than his newly published text does. They represent interference within his authorial kingdom. The three figures draw him down to their level, where Dencombe has to compete with the Countess and Miss Vernham over the possession of Doctor Hugh. While Dencombe needs Doctor Hugh's support, as Doctor Hugh is a prolific reader of his work, the Countess needs his medical care. Miss Vernham is supposed to inherit the Countess's fortune and Doctor Hugh seems to be regarded as her prospective husband. Julie Rivkin, in her acute analysis, points out that three figures represent different kinds of readers of Dencombe's text. According to her, they appear in his kingdom as readers who are both supportive and antagonistic.

Rivkin judges Doctor Hugh, a Platonic, idealized image of the reader, as an authorial echo (Rivkin 162). He is Dencombe's "healing reader" (Rivkin 163), while the Countess (and Miss Vernham) are "deconstructive supplement[s] who fail to remain under authorial control" (Rivkin 162-3). According to Rivkin, a Platonic theory of reading suggests an "essential unity" (Rivkin 146), that a singularity underlies the signifiers of textual representation. James's Preface to *The Golden Bowl* assumes the essential unity and meaning of his texts under the authority of the author. However, his metaphors in the preface inevitably suggest more a deconstructive or Derridean meaning to the text, a multiplication of meaning through deviations and differences. In my view, Rivkin's analysis is accurate in asserting that the relationship between writing and reading in "The Middle Years" questions the

[1] Rivkin's argument is concerned with the controversial discussion on the priority of James's editions, such as Hershel Parker and Philip Horne. According to Rivkin, their argument attempts to define which version of James's stories is superior and definitive. Rivkin regards both of their arguments as derived from the same attempt to "stabilize James's authority by freezing it in time" (Rivkin 143). She clarifies that James's practice of revision potentially cannot be explained by that kind of concept of time.

stability of such boundaries. Writing and reading are supplementary to each other and exchangeable.

Based on this analysis, Rivkin concludes that the last scene of the story is a "confirmation of his[Dencombe's] fully achieved authority" (Rivkin 161). In the end of the story, the Countess (and Miss Vernham), a supplement in a "debased and dangerous form" (Rivkin 162), loses Doctor Hugh and dies in despair. The Countess's fortune is not enough to keep Doctor Hugh on her side and to bind him with Miss Vernham. According to Rivkin, the last scene shows that Dencombe and Doctor Hugh, author and reader, share a unified and single meaning of texts. In this sense, then, Doctor Hugh is "an extension," one which Dencombe so strongly longs for. In my view, however, the last scene does not offer the celebration of art, with Dencombe's desire fulfilled, but instead remains ambiguous. It is perhaps incorrect to judge Doctor Hugh as a Platonic reader, one who is obedient to Dencombe. Rivkin says that the Countess and Miss Vernham are "deconstructive supplements," but it seems that Doctor Hugh also should be a deconstructive supplement as he is dangerous to Dencombe's authorial identity. The last scene, a conversation between Doctor Hugh and Dencombe, makes this clear:

> "If you've doubted, if you've despaired, you've always 'done' it," his visitor subtly argued.
> "We've done something or other," Dencombe conceded.
> "Something or other is everything. It's the feasible. It's you!"
> "Comforter!" poor Dencombe ironically sighed.
> "But it's true," insisted his friend.
> "It's true. It's frustration that doesn't count."
> "Frustration's only life," said Doctor Hugh.
> "Yes, it's what passes." Poor Dencombe was barely audible, but he had marked with the words the virtual end of his first and only chance.
> (MY 254)

Rivkin notes that Dencombe repeats what Doctor Hugh says and vice versa, which means that they have finally reached a perfect accordance. If Hugh is a supplement to Dencombe's writing in the sense that he completes Dencombe's lack, taking care

of his physical condition as well as his text, then the harmonized voices of Dencombe and Hugh in the end stand for a kind of "marriage" (MY 254) between the perfect reader and the author. As such, it is the celebration of art, according to Rivkin. As a result of this relationship, "revision is ... unnecessary" (Rivkin 161).

Their overlapping voices, however, symbolize a violation of each other's identity. In a way, Dencombe's voice is replaced by Hugh's voice. Dencombe is finally led to repeat Hugh's words as if they were his own words. From the beginning of the story, Hugh is the very person who attracts Dencombe's attention, exposing Dencombe's "identity" (MY 246) as an author and threatening it with his ever-present employer, the Countess. Dencombe has been afraid that Doctor Hugh will notice that he is the author of the published text. Therefore, once his identity has been disclosed, Dencombe loses consciousness in confrontation with Doctor Hugh. When he awakes, Doctor Hugh says, "You'll be all right again — I know all about you now" (MY 246) and offers his help: "I want to do something for you. I want to do everything" (MY 247). This is a critical moment for Dencombe. The narrator continues:

> The young man held his hand, hanging over him, and poor Dencombe, weakly aware of this living pressure, simply lay there and accepted his devotion. He couldn't do anything less — he needed help too much.
>
> The idea of the help he needed was very present to him that night, which he spent in a lucid stillness, an intensity of thought that constituted a reaction from his hours of stupor. He was lost, he was lost — he was lost if he couldn't be saved. He wasn't afraid of suffering, of death, wasn't even in love with life; but he had had a deep demonstration of desire. It came over him in the long quiet hours that only with 'The Middle Years' had he taken his flight; only on that day, visited by soundless processions, had he recognised his kingdom. (MY 247)

Dencombe's fear is realised at this moment, not by the Countess and Miss Vernham but by the very figure he desires to. Doctor Hugh thinks that he knows all about Dencombe and can help him in every sense of the word. "Poor Dencombe" (MY 247) needs Hugh's help more than ever, but he is aware that his help is double-edged; "too much" in the sense that Hugh could overwhelm him and "too much" in the sense that Hugh's help may always be insufficient. This last scene makes clear this crisis.

"Poor Dencombe" (MY 254), again, fully aware that reading requires endless writing, is weary with writing and grieves over losing control over his text. His most reliable reader's voice overwhelms his own voice, but Dencombe cannot speak up to regain writerly authority. His death silences him.

Therefore, Hugh is as dangerous to Dencombe's authorial identity as the Countess and Miss Vernham. According to Rivkin, Hugh, "an idealized image of the reader as authorial echo," is dangerous in so far as he accompanies another type of reader, the Countess and Miss Vernham. Rivkin points out that the Countess's huge body and her background as solely a consumer stand for the "excess" of revisionary production. The Countess is a dangerous deconstructive supplement (Rivkin 162). By her death, of course, the story excludes the possibility of her excess. Hugh, being a danger, however, is of dangerous as she is. Hugh always reminds Dencombe of money and he is bound to the Countess because of her money. Even in the conversation about Dencombe's health, Hugh uses the expression "earning" one's rest, an expression that Dencombe resents. By introducing the Countess and the fluidity of money into Dencombe's kingdom and by looking down at him at his bedside in the end, Hugh leads Dencombe into a relinquishing of the pursuit of authority and a yielding to the "madness of art." Hugh, therefore, is the figure who most clearly functions as a deconstructive supplement near Dencombe.

If both Doctor Hugh and the Countess are supplements to an imaginary text, an ideal form of literary work, then both are deconstructive supplements. At the very least, both reveal that Dencombe's text is not self-sufficient. Hugh brings a signifying chain into Dencombe's authorial kingdom, and he cannot choose Dencombe or the fortune the Countess embodies until the end.

3 Narrating Realism: The First-Person Narrator

Hugh's textual identity will be far clearer if compared with the identity of the narrator of "The Death of the Lion." Although the comparison needs a careful consideration, there are important overlaps in the setting. The story again focuses on the relationship between an author and a young man who is, in his own words, an admirer and prolific reader of the author. Unlike "The Middle Years," however, "The Death of the Lion" is told by the young man. It is worth focusing on the similarities and the differences between the first-person narrator and Doctor Hugh,

since Doctor Hugh is not allowed to narrate the story.

The exchange of textual identities that occurs in "The Death of the Lion" encompasses a broader range; specifically, gender and national identities, as well as the identities of author and reader. In his essay, Paul B. Armstrong calls such exchange "the contingency of identity" (Armstrong 99) in his essay. Neil Parady, the author in the story, has two rival writers and both have names typically identified with members of the opposite sex. The author of "Obsessions" is Guy Walsingham, who is actually a woman and the author of "The Other Way Round," Dora Forbes, who is a male writer.

As in "The Middle Years," here too there is a crossing of the boundary between the author and the reader. Mrs. Wimbush, one of Parady's readers, is in a rivalry with the narrator, a young critic and an admirer of Parady. According to the narrator, although Mrs. Wimbush is also an admirer of Parady, she does not read his work and it is she who takes Parady into society, thereby destroying his life by ruining his reputation as an incomparable author. Actually, Mrs. Wimbush is using Parady to place herself at the centre of her society. She finally changes places with Parady. The narrator sees that Parady sits in the carriage with Mrs. Wimbush's company. Parady's place is in a little supplementary seat (DL 277). Mrs. Wimbush lets Mr. Rumble paint Parady's portrait (DL 274), which the narrator hates. In the eyes of the narrator, the portrait is not a work of art but only serves to make Parady a commodity. The portrait circulates as if it had the identical value with the original — Parady himself. Therefore, Parady's portrait becomes a copy that violates his originality, at the same time allows Mrs. Wimbush to grant it an immeasurable value, which competes with the original. If the Countess in "The Middle Years" is a deconstructive supplement, wealthy Mrs. Wimbush is also a deconstructive reader, who completes still more numbers of people.

Not only Mrs. Wimbush but also Mr. Pinhorn, the head of an editorial office of a weekly periodical, is trying to manipulate Parady's identity. Mr. Pinhorn is in charge of "bringing the paper up" (DL 255), pitching Parady as a popular writer. Parady is just one among many potential commodities for Mr. Pinhorn. Parady's identity is useful to him because he can build up his popularity based on it. Mr. Pinhorn is, in a way, the author of Parady. The narrator, a worker or a writer in Mr. Pinhorn's office, depicts Mr. Pinhorn as follows:

> It was a pure case of professional *flair* — he[Mr. Pinhorn] had smelt the coming glory as an animal smells its distant prey. (DL 257)

The "prey" refers to Neil Parady. Mr. Pinhorn is potentially the predatory "lion" of consumerism. Perhaps we can even say that "the Lion" in the title refers to both the author and the publishing industry. Neil Parady appears to be a great writer, "lionized" as such, but actually he is tamed and kept in a cage as a commodity by critics and readers. Mr. Pinhorn, too, is a lion, one who actually takes hold of the author and the reader. The title "The Death of the Lion" therefore seems to indicate not only the literal death of Neil Parady but also the figurative death of Mr. Pinhorn. After Neil Parady becomes famous, his work does not seem to mean anything to the publishing industry. In fact, the characters in "The Death of the Lion" do not pay attention to the author's work. Parady's manuscript is lost and never found, which does not seem to cause anyone any serious regret.

There is still another lion in the story: the narrator. While criticizing Mrs. Wimbush, the narrator also tries to exchange identities with Parady. This is obvious when he talks with a young American lady, Miss Fanny Hurter, who is another admirer of Parady. The narrator thinks that she is foreign and interesting, like in "the Arabian Nights" (DL 270). That is, her national identity as an American is reduced to merely being an exotic object of the narrator's fiction and used to strengthen the narrator's identity as Parady's double.

The narrator asks her to keep away from Parady and not to even see him directly. His advice to her is "Succeed in never seeing him at all!" (DL 271) and "Read him, read him — that will be an education in decency" (DL 273). According to the narrator, that would represent true respect for Parady's authorship. However, what the narrator really is doing here is adopting Parady's identity. Miss Hurter understands Parady's work only through the narrator and therefore inevitably identifies Parady with the narrator. The identities of Parady and the narrator overlap and become inseparable for Miss Hurter. The tie of Miss Hurter and the narrator is strengthened thereby strengthening the tie between Parady and the narrator. Miss Hurter is the "hurter" of Parady's authorial identity. In a sense, the narrator is also a lion, who is inseparable from Parady.

This lion, unlike other lions, was once a reader, survived, and now is writing this

story to us, the readers: the story, "The Death of the Lion," about Neil Parady, the lost talented author, and his lost manuscript. Because of the absence of the manuscript and the author, the narrator can narrate this story as if it were "the" only reality. The lost manuscript is forever covered up, and the signifier floats, far removed from the signified. Besides crossing boundaries, the written text does not have any strong tie to its author either. After the death of Parady, all that remains is the lost manuscript. The "lion's" death keeps the manuscript forever sacred and the moment of writing preserved, which means a further revision is not necessary. At the same time, however, it cannot be exposed to any reader. Instead, it gives birth to another writing, the one the narrator is writing. The lion's death gives birth to another lion, similar to but different from the original lion.

As has been seen, a gap exists between the first-person narrator's story and "the reality." Because of the gap, the readers know that there is an alternative reality, yet it is indeterminable. Doctor Hugh in "The Middle Years" does not explain his intention, but the third-person narrator's depiction of the conversation and the adjective "poor" as in "poor Dencombe" seem to show the same gap between the story he is telling and an alternative reality. It can therefore be said that "The Middle Years" refers to a similar relationship between an author and his supposedly reliable young reader in "The Death of the Lion."

4 Reading and Writing

Both authors in "The Middle Years" and "The Death of the Lion" try to find a fully accomplished authority over their text. Their authority is threatened by various readers such as the Countess, Miss Vernham, Mrs. Wimbush and the first-person narrator (a "deconstructive supplement," in Rivkin's words), while, at the same time, the authors need their readers' acceptance. Being reborn as a reader, Dencombe tries to maintain his authorial identity by continuing to revise his own text. According to Rivkin's analysis, however, every revision needs further revision, in a process that never ends. The death of the authors could preserve authority by excluding any room for further reading and revision. However, the authors in both stories are unwilling to retreat from their readers. Dencombe searches for his "extension" in Doctor Hugh, who is supposed to be his obedient reader, while Neil Parady persistently tries to remain in the readers' society in spite of the narrator's

cautious warning.

In the world of readers, even an apparently ideal reader, Doctor Hugh, seems to be another form of a deconstructive supplement. As the narrator of "The Death of the Lion" also suggests, authors and readers compete over the initiative in reading and writing the text. It is also difficult to regard the narrator as a legitimate heir of Neil Parady. In my view, contrary to Rivkin's reading, Doctor Hugh is not an obedient reader. Rather, he is a reader who never catches up with the moment of writing and who is never able to avoid the concept of money and his own claims of identity. In other words, the distinction that Rivkin makes between the Countess and Doctor Hugh does not adequately explain the indeterminacy of the text's identity.

Looking back at the conversation between Dencombe and Doctor Hugh, we might recall that the initiative of authorial words belongs to Hugh. Hugh leads and superimposes his words over Dencombe's, making it difficult to distinguish Hugh's words from Dencombe's own. Hugh is not so much a Platonic reader of Dencombe as one who overwhelms Dencombe in narrating for Dencombe, especially in light of money and materialism. This means that the identity of an author and its reader is reversed. Dencombe is "poor" as the third-person narrator's repetition emphasises. Thus to Dencombe, April is comfortable but also the cruelest month[2]. It is a time of rebirth. "The ring of a marriage-bell" (MY 254), which has often been considered the sign of a strong tie between the two, therefore rather ironically comes as a sign of discord and the impossibility of an ideal reader. Dencombe's authorial identity is undermined by the exercise of reading and writing, by the supposedly most reliable reader and even by himself. James's first-person narrator clearly shows the relationship between reading and writing, processes that are inseparable and yet also ring with discord.

WORKS BY HENRY JAMES

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[2] From Hagberg, referring to T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land.*

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